

Creating a diverse coalition of community, business, energy, and environment stakeholders can increase support and resources for statewide goals to advance low-income energy efficiency programs, solar programs, training provisions, and other measures. Broad stakeholder involvement and support is crucial for achieving state goals related to advancing energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies in low-income communities. An example from Illinois illustrating the potential from such a coalition is described below.

Benefits

Community stakeholders and leaders can engage in early coalition-building, both formally or informally, and share expert knowledge that helps drive development of low-income energy programs. Stakeholders in Illinois say their coalition has built support to implement programs and has increased the ability to address issues that arise.

Key Elements

An informal group comprised of businesses, community organizations, contractors, and other relevant stakeholders can identify the need for a formal coalition to advance broad energy goals or low-income sector specific goals. From these early conversations and shared goals, the informal group can establish a cohesive and focused rapport. In Illinois, the group worked together to identify and invite additional participants and initiated the formal coalition. The coalition worked to craft a vision and program goals and a roadmap to identify appropriate steps to achieve agreed-upon outcomes. Discussions and action items included meaningful provisions for low-income populations. Low-income stakeholder work groups were formed to discuss specific components of a vision, goal, or roadmap and ensure underserved community needs were considered as part of a larger initiative.

Example

The State of Illinois's Future Energy Jobs Act (FEJA), passed in 2016, was the culmination of several years of work by the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, comprised of Illinois businesses and organizations. According to organizers of the group, before this group formally came together as the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, it collaborated informally, in effect laying the groundwork for the establishment of FEJA. FEJA mandated that \$25 million of energy efficiency funds go to low-income families in ComEd service territory per year and \$8.35 million per year in Ameren Illinois service territory. Prior to FEJA, there were no specific requirements for low-income energy efficiency funds. The Illinois Solar for All Working Group, a subset of members of the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, formed to ensure that practices and policies of FEJA would maximize solar benefits for underserved communities. This group provided input to the production of the Illinois Power Agency's Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan, which lays out how the state will pay for and structure programs under FEJA. In summary, a diverse and long-established coalition helped identify the need for new energy efficiency and renewable energy programs that included multiple low-income components.

Applicability

Coalition building is beneficial in any region, particularly when it comes to identifying barriers and opportunities to advance energy affordability for low-income communities. Stakeholder engagement and discussion helps identify priority needs and creates trust among collaborators. While in Illinois this led to the passage of a sweeping policy, in other states this kind of coalition can lead to the identification of gaps in services and development of well-designed, cross-agency, low-income energy programs that advance the state's energy and economic agenda and can help create new opportunities for those living in underserved communities.

Implementation Considerations

Instead of making early and specific assurances as a way to draw stakeholders into the formation of the coalition, groups can take a broad approach to identify needs or barriers that should be addressed by the coalition. In Illinois, stakeholders were prepared to leverage opportunities as they arose. For example, with FEJA, the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition leveraged Exelon's need for nuclear funding. The coalition was able to help the utility with its goals in return for support of low-income energy efficiency programming.

Links

- [Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition](#), Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition
- [DOE Low-Income Energy Affordability Program Toolkit: Stakeholder Engagement \(2019\), Better Buildings Initiative](#), U.S. Department of Energy